



National Consultation on Issues of Transgender/Hijra Community

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

UNDP India supports the current National AIDS Control Programme of India across nine states, helping the national programme expand its reach and become increasingly more inclusive of those vulnerable to HIV. It approaches this support to the NACP3 from the gender and rights perspective, with a significant emphasis on stigma reduction and greater involvement of PLHIV and members of key populations.

The practice of male-to-male sexuality in India is very complex and in many ways, unique; MSM and transgenders (TG) as a group have emerged as a core high risk group in the national HIV/AIDS programme. According to recent sentinel surveillance data in India, sero-prevalence among MSM and TG populations is greater (5.69%) than among female sex workers (5.38%). Interventions among MSM and TG are still very new and do not perhaps reach the most vulnerable.

The mainstream society in India does not always accept Transgender/Hijras, who are often, objects of ridicule, mockery and exploitation. The social and cultural practice of exploitation with discrimination coupled with poverty, illiteracy and limited opportunities of employment have forced the community onto a path of high-risk behavior including sex work. The combination of high-risk behaviour with limited prevention alternatives has resulted in increased vulnerability of TG Hijras to HIV and STI.

UNDP has recently been identified as the lead UN agency to work on issues of sexual minorities. In this regard, UNDP India has initiated dialogue with a range of stakeholders to contribute to UNDP's process of articulating its strategic focus on the HIV needs of men who have sex with men and the transgender.

As a first step towards this, in October 2008, UNDP organized a national consultation in Delhi with MSM and TG Community Based Organizations. This community consultation helped crystallize issues and significantly brought to the fore the need for urgent and special attention to the Transgender/ Hijra community. UNDP supported six regional consultations were held during May and June 2009. The regional consultations provided a platform for dialogues on enabling expansion, strengthening and scaling up of strategies and programmes addressing male sexual health (with special focus on transgender and hijras) & HIV and deliberations on key policies and required actions.

A national consultation has now been planned by UNDP in consultation with community representatives.

OBJECTIVE OF THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION

Objective 1: To generate and share knowledge on social, policy, rights and resources issues relevant to Transgender and Hijra community in relation to HIV in India

Objective 2: To agree on a commonly acceptable set of definitions

Objective 3: To agree on suitable and agreeable strategies for addressing the issues of the Transgender and Hijra community

PARTICIPANTS

The participants will be representatives of the Transgender and Hijra community organizations from across the country, NACO, different government ministries/bodies, donor community, state government officials, NGO representatives and UN agencies.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION

- Consensus definition/s of the term 'transgender' as well as the complexities of issues involved
- A set of recommendations - on HIV prevention and mitigation needs, social and legal recognition issues, crisis intervention strategies and interventions on issues of gender, Information and resources
- Identified obstacles and challenges that impede planning and implementation of 'TG - Hijra and HIV-' specific programmes and services in India
- Suggested strategies and programmes for improving and scaling-up 'TG - Hijra and HIV'-specific prevention, treatment, care and support interventions and services